

11. HOUBARA BUSTARD *CHLAMYDOTIS UNDULATA*: A RARE RECORD  
FROM KERALA  
(With a photograph)

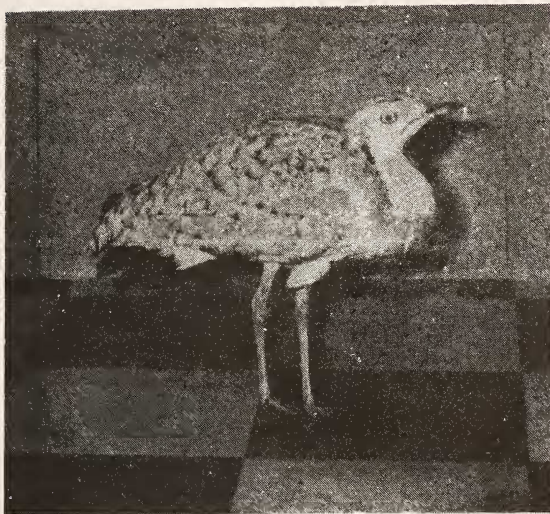


Photo Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*)  
from Kerala.

On 7th Nov. 1986, a local Malayalam newspaper carried a report with a small photograph about the capture of a rare bird at Kanhangad ( $c 12^{\circ} 25' N$ ;  $75^{\circ} 5' E$ ) in Kasaragod District, the northernmost district of Kerala. From the photograph, it was obvious that the bird belonged to the Bustard family. A bird-watcher from Cannanore, Mr. C. Jayakumar, went

to the place and investigated. The bird was found on 5th Nov. by one Mr. Bhaskaran, an agricultural labourer, in a tobacco field near the seashore at Chettukundu, a coastal village near Kanhangad town. As it was being mobbed by crows, Mr. Bhaskaran captured the bird and took it home, where it attracted a lot of people including the local press, and hence the report. The bird did not accept any food, though water, boiled rice (!) etc. were offered. On 8th Nov. 1986, the flight feathers of the bird were clipped to prevent it from flying away. The bird, which was alive and active till then, suddenly bled from its nostrils and died soon after. It was later identified as a Houbara Bustard. *Chlamydotis undulata*.

According to Ali & Ripley (1983) the Houbara Bustard is a common winter visitor to Pakistan, straggling east to Delhi. It is commonly seen in western Rajasthan and Gujarat, especially Kutch. It has never been reported from south India, and this is the first record. As November is the migratory season, I think the bird accidentally drifted away, got disoriented and landed up in Kerala. The bird was being mobbed by crows it was easily picked up; this proves that it was injured and lost.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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July 14, 1987.

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12. ON THE OCCURRENCE AND STATUS OF RINGED PLOVER *CHARADRIUS HIATICULA* (LOWE) IN MADRAS CITY (SOUTHERN INDIA)

In the last eight years of active birdwatching in Madras, I have observed and recorded the Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) in Madras, at the Adyar Estuary, on no less than 53 occasions.

This species closely resembles the Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*), a more common and widespread species, but *hiaticula* could always be

distinguished from the former by the following characteristics: the more robust appearance, the brighter (orange) leg colour, the orange-based black bill, the presence of the white wing-bar seen in flight, the facial pattern and by its distinctive call-notes. On several occasions, both species were noticed side by side and a comparison was possible. The Ringed

Plover (*hiaticula*) was usually present on the mudflats of the river in small groups of 4 or 5 birds and occasionally up to about a dozen or so.

It is very interesting to note from Table 1 that all the sightings of this species have been in the four months from January to April, although I have a doubtful record of it on 2nd September 1984. The earliest recorded date of the *hiaticula* in Madras was on 2nd January (1983) and the last on 29th April (also in 1983).

The water level of the Adyar river is quite high between the months of May and October and the sandbars and mudflats remain inundated during this period, depriving the Ringed Plover of its favourite habitat. I presume that this is perhaps the reason why I have not been able to record *hiaticula* here earlier in the season. The sandbar blocking the river mouth is washed off during the course of the (North-east) monsoon that is normally active between October and November. Thereafter the river comes under tidal influence and mudflats and sandbars appear at low tide.

My observations indicate that the Ringed Plover is not all that uncommon as is suggested by Ali and Ripley (1983) - to quote: "Straggler or very rare winter visitor, possibly sometimes confused by observers with Little Ringed Plover, and in immature plumage with Lesser Sand Plover. So far recorded with specimens only from Gilgit (1881, *GF* 9 : 359), Sultanpur near Delhi (1879, *SF* 8 : 197) and Maldive Islands (1958, *JBNHS* 60 : 571). Authentically sight-

TABLE I  
SUMMARY OF SIGHTINGS OF THE RINGED PLOVER AT  
THE ADYAR ESTUARY, MADRAS CITY

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	Total
1979	-	-	-	1	1
1980	-	-	-	2	2
1981	-	-	3	3	6
1982	3	2	4	-	9
1983	3	2	4	7	16
1984	-	-	1	3	4
1985	1	3	-	1	5
1986	1	1	5	3	10
Total					53

recorded: Karachi Harbour (C.B. Ticehurst, *Ibis* 1923 : 655), Jaffna Peninsula, Ceylon (G.M. Henry 1944, *Loris* 3 : 132)." Abdulali and Hussain (1971) have recorded this species in February 1970 at Muthupet, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu. Subsequently, I understand that the Avifauna project has also come across this species at Pt. Calimere. However, no further information could be elicited on these records. It would be interesting to compare the dates of arrival and frequency of sightings of the Ringed Plover in the two areas.

December 20, 1986.

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ALI, SALIM & RIPLEY, S.D. (1983): Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. Compact Edition. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

### 13. AN HITHERTO UNRECORDED NESTING SITE OF A REDVENTED BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS CAFER* (LINNAEUS)

On 25th July 1986, I noticed a nest of a Redvented Bulbul in an unusual habitat. It was placed on a dried *Acacia arabica* twig which was lying on a thick mat of floating water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), in the Manasarovar area of the Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, and was well concealed by the water hyacinth. The water hyacinth was about 72 cm tall, and the nest, cup-shaped and made of dried grass, was about 22 cm above the water level. The acacia twig acted as a base of support to the nest, around which it was wrapped. On the day it was

found it contained one egg. Another was added the following day. But unfortunately on the 28th the eggs were missing, probably predated.

Considering the fact that as a rule Redvented Bubluls build their nests in shrubs, hedges and on slender branches of trees, normally at heights between one and three metres, the present nesting site appears unique.

September 26, 1986.

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